

THE AMERICAN DREAM IN JACK LONDON'S WORKS

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Abstract. The article is about how American dream is expressed in the novel of "Martin Eden". Martin Eden's successful movement upwards seems to perfectly illustrate what the American Dream stands for. Nevertheless, as he climbs to the top of the hierarchy and gains fame as a writer, his disillusionment grows stronger. His success brings neither satisfaction, nor acceptance or happiness. He starts feeling alienated both from the upper strata, whom he used to envy, and from the lower strata, from whose environment he has managed to escape.

Keywords: working class, American dream, happiness, naturalism.

INTRODUCTION.

Jack London's works present one of the most complex and often contradictory representations of the American Dream in early twentieth century literature. The American Dream is often taken to mean that anybody can succeed through hard work and determination, regardless of their background. But the question of whether this ideal is actually available or is rather an illusion born of class, environment, and sheer survival is one that London returns to again and again in his fiction.

The struggle between the personal desire for success and the harshness of nature and society forms a central theme in many London stories. Survival is substituted for prosperity in his novels like "The Call of the Wild" and "White Fang". His characters – humans and animals alike – do not seek wealth or upward social mobility in a traditional sense, but strive for survival in an environment that does not care whether they live or die. The American dream is seen by London from a different perspective.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS.

In "Martin Eden," one of London's works in which he deals directly with the topic of the American Dream, the issue becomes even more central and critical. Martin Eden is an ordinary man who is trying to become a writer because he believes that his success can enable him to move from the working classes to the bourgeoisie. The story about Martin's successful movement upwards seems to perfectly illustrate what the American Dream stands for. Nevertheless, as he climbs to the top of the hierarchy and gains fame as a writer, his disillusionment grows stronger. His success brings neither satisfaction, nor acceptance or happiness. He starts feeling alienated both from the upper strata, whom he used to envy, and from the lower strata, from whose environment he has managed to escape.

Jack London's own life experiences have played a large role in his critique. Growing up in poverty and having done a number of labor-intensive jobs, Jack London knew what it was like for a person to be deprived of chances to succeed in the industrialized society he lived in. In his writings, London adopted a deterministic philosophy, which was largely affected by the literary style of Naturalism. This school of literature emphasizes the importance of one's surroundings, genetics and socio-economic factors in comparison to personal choice.

Another critical element of London's works includes that of civilization versus nature. When his protagonists live and work in the Yukon or in the wilderness of Alaska, their success is not gauged in terms of social climbing but in terms of adaptability and physical prowess. It becomes clear from this point that the notion of the American Dream based on a social and urban industrial civilization could be rather artificial compared to what one could find in natural settings.

CONCLUSION.

Finally, neither does Jack London fully support nor refute the existence of the American Dream. Rather, the writer complicates it. The literature written by the author shows that although ambition and betterment can be strong motivating factors, yet they have limitations because of economic imbalance, social classes, and, last but not least, the indifference of nature. As a result, the concept of the American Dream turns from the promise of achievement and betterment to the more complicated question of whose dream it actually is.

In such a way, Jack London's writings stay relevant till nowadays raising the question about the universal nature of the American Dream.

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